DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 317 CE 050 882

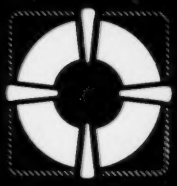
AUTHOR	Faddis, Constance R.
TITLE	The Helping Process Booklet for Team Members. Dropout Prevention Series.
INSTITUTION	Ohio State Univ., Columbus. National Center for Research in Vocational Education.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	88
GRANT	G008620030
NOTE	34p.; For other guides in this series, see CE 050 879-889.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Center Publications, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090 (Order No. SP700HP04--$3.50; related videocassette, SP700HP07--$25.00; set of six Helping Process booklets and videocassette, SP700HP--$39.50).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Education; Classroom Techniques; Counseling; *Dropout Prevention; *Dropout Programs; Dropouts; Guides; *Helping Relationship; High Risk Students; Intervention; Mentors; Parent Responsibility; *Parent Role; Potential Dropouts; *School Personnel; Secondary Education; *Teacher Role; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This booklet for dropout prevention team members is part of a series of program materials for a school-based intervention process to help at-risk students stay in school. Team members may include teachers, health care workers, parents, counselors, community volunteers, employers, or other caring adults. An introduction lists specific responsibilities of team members. The remainder of the booklet contains suggestions for ways that specific helping process team members can carry out their part of the Individual Helping Plan creatively and effectively. Creative ways are recommended for educators (academic and vocational instructors, bilingual/English as a second language instructors, tutors and classroom aides), support service persons (guidance counselors; truant officer/attendance aides; social workers, health care workers, and other noneducation professionals; community volunteers), parents and other family members, and employers. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED298317



DROPOUT PREVENTION SERIES

The Helping Process Booklet for Team Members

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

NCRVE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE 058 882

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

2

THE NATIONAL CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education's mission is to increase the ability of diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations to solve educational problems relating to individual career planning, preparation, and progression. The National Center fulfills its mission by

- Generating knowledge through research
- Developing educational programs and products
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes
- Providing information for national planning and policy
- Installing educational programs and products
- Operating information systems and services
- Conducting leadership development and training programs

For further information contact:

Program Information Office
National Center for Research
in Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210

Telephone: (614) 486-3655 or (800) 848-4815

THE HELPING PROCESS BOOKLET FOR TEAM MEMBERS

Constance R. Faddis
Sandra G. Pritz, Project Director

SP700HP04

The work presented herein was developed by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education pursuant to a grant with the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. Grantees undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official U.S. Department of Education position or policy.

Copyright © 1988, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University. All rights reserved.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

Working as a Helping Process Team Member 1

CREATIVE WAYS TO CARRY OUT YOUR PART OF THE IHP 5

Educators

Academic and Vocational Instructors 5
Bilingual/ESL Instructors 11
Tutors and Classroom Aids 12

Support Service Persons

Guidance Counselors 13
Truant Officer/Attendance Aides 16
Social Workers, Health Care Workers and other Noneducation Professionals 18
Community Volunteers 19

Parents and Other Family Members 22

Employers 24

INTRODUCTION

NOTE TO TEAM MEMBERS: Before you start reading this booklet, please be sure you have already read *The Helping Process Overview Guidebook*. The guidebook contains important information about the helping process that you and your fellow team members will need to make the most of this team member booklet for yourself and your at-risk students.

Working as a Helping Process Team Member

By becoming a member of a student's "helping process" team, you've put yourself in a position to make a real difference in a young person's life! Whether you are a teacher, a health care worker, a parent, a counselor, a community volunteer, an employer, or other caring adult, the helping process can help you reach young people who are at important crossroads in their lives. Through your effort and caring, students can learn how it feels to succeed and make positive choices for their future.

As a Helping Process team member, you will have a number of specific responsibilities to fulfill, as well as some nonspecific ones. Here are the **specific responsibilities of team members:**

- Establish and maintain a positive, caring relationship with the student.
- Establish and maintain a good working relationship with your fellow team members.

- Work with the student and other team members to design the initial Individual Helping Plan (IHP), which provides the educational and support services the student needs to succeed and stay in school.

- Carry out the specific tasks and roles assigned to you in the IHP.

- Respect the confidentiality of your interactions with the student, sharing only such information as is necessary and critical for other team members to know how to make the IHP work effectively.

- Be alert to the student's changing needs and meet with the student and team members to make changes in the IHP whenever they are needed.

- Work with other team members to prepare reports on the student's progress and to make the entire helping process team accountable to the school or dropout prevention program administration.

Besides these specific responsibilities, there may be times when you also need to act in other, nonspecified roles. Some of these may be mediator, advocate, broker, role model, enabler, advisor, and friend. *The Helping Process Overview Guidebook* offers more information about these generic helping process roles. But no matter what role you find yourself in, the bottom line of the helping process is to do **whatever it takes** to help the student stay in school and work successfully toward that high school diploma.

The rest of this booklet contains suggestions for ways that specific helping process team members can carry out their part of the IHP creatively and effectively. It's a good idea to read all of these sections so that you have a good grasp of what other team members are doing. You should also be able to find your own particular specialty area in one of the following sections:

- **Educators** (academic and vocational instructors, teachers of bilingual and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) programs, and tutors and classroom aides)

- **Support service persons** (guidance counselors, social workers, truant officers/attendance aides, health care workers, other non-educational professionals, community volunteers, etc.)
- **Parents/family members**
- **Employers**

CREATIVE WAYS TO CARRY OUT YOUR PART OF THE IHP

Educators

Academic and Vocational Instructors

Here are suggestions for making the most of your instructional activities to help a student succeed in school and complete a diploma program.

- **Do not accept negative behavior.** Look for ways to help students behave more appropriately by modeling appropriate behavior, by reinforcing it, by being consistent about how you react to negative behavior, and by discussing how appropriate and inappropriate behavior relate to success in school, work, and life. Clear rules and consistent enforcement are essential to maintaining an orderly environment.

- **Design learning activities that allow the student to experience frequent personal achievement and success.** As one school superintendent said about the dropouts from his school, "I think what has crippled these kids is the attitude that's been drummed into them that they can't possibly achieve anything, that they will never be better than they are at 15." To counter this, reinforce your students' positive experiences by providing achievable short-term goals, recognizing the accomplishment of those goals, and encouraging a sense of personal worth, self-confidence, and hope in the future.

- **Use nontraditional curricula and instructional approaches.** Many at-risk students are "turned off" by the social control, competition, and order that characterize traditional classrooms and will be difficult to motivate in such settings. Effective approaches for these students are classes that are personal, informal, nurturing,

and offer a diversity of educational experiences. Review your repertoire of instructional strategies and your preferred teaching modality to be certain that you can offer instruction in ways that will assist all students to learn.

- **Individualize instruction,** particularly when teaching basic skills like reading and math. Ideally, each student needs a personalized curriculum and personalized instruction. This means making sure that each student starts at his or her own level and proceeds at a pace that is reasonable for his or her particular aptitudes and needs but that offers enough challenge to keep the student from becoming bored.

- **Keep class sizes small** when working with at-risk students. This will allow you to give the students the personal attention they need to become interested in the subject and work to succeed in the class. Low pupil-teacher ratios have been shown to be better predictors of retention than even per-pupil program expenditures.

- **Use "real-life" examples, problems, and materials** when teaching, and stress the immediate and practical. For example, focus on functional competencies, such as reading want ads or calculating overtime, in basic skills training. Try to find or develop low-vocabulary, high-interest texts, materials, and instructional activities that relate to the backgrounds of the students (e.g., an industrial education course with texts that reflect urban settings for inner city students). Relating what is learned to what the students will really need in adult life will help them make critical learning connections and keep them motivated to learn.

- **Use a variety of instructional materials and approaches,** including high use of filmstrips, movies, videos, guest speakers (peer speakers who almost dropped out of school and who are now successful workers are especially good speakers), and other nonreading teaching approaches.

- **Make sure that students spent plenty of "time-on-task"** with instructional activities. This is especially important for basic skills training. Avoid fragmenting learning tasks by minimizing social or other distractions that occur on a routine or lengthy basis.

- **Group and regroup students according to their reading levels and personalities.** Move students freely from group to group according to how well they are performing and how well they are cooperating with each other.

- **Provide experiential education** that links students to the outside community, such as tutoring elementary or middle school students, working in nursing homes or day care centers, helping operate food pantries, renovating urban housing, and so forth. Such experiences help students develop a sense of purpose and interdependence and motivate them to work and learn in the outside world.

- **Teach to "automaticity"** whenever possible. The mastery of any skill, no matter how routine or refined, depends on being able to perform it automatically—that is, unconsciously, with speed and accuracy, while consciously carrying on other brain functions.

- **Use computers to individualize instruction.** Computerized instruction, particularly for basic skills instruction, has great appeal for many at-risk students, in large part because of the "instant feedback" and entertainment element in repeated drills that computers provide. Computerized instruction also facilitates an "open-entry/open-exit," self-paced, competency-based classroom. Most computerized training programs also provide teachers with instant recordkeeping and mastery-test accountability.

- **Use cooperative education** if it is available through your program. Make special efforts to use experience from the work site to reinforce what is learned in the classroom—most co-op programs miss the boat on this! When work experience is actively connected to what is being learned in the classroom, potential dropouts are more likely to stay in the program and pay attention

to what they are learning. Co-op programs also give many students who must support themselves or a family the opportunity to earn wages while also going to school to get a diploma.

- **Use vocational education vocabulary and jargon** as often as possible in teaching, even for academic courses. Vocational education has been shown to be a strong magnet for keeping at-risk students in school, largely because its relevance to their future as workers is readily apparent to most students, even less motivated ones.

- **Team-teach classes** whenever practical. At-risk students respond positively to well-coordinated team teaching, which reduces the pupil-teacher ratio and enables instructors to give students more of their personal attention.

- **Build educational experiences on students' previous experiences** (preferably in the "real world") and link them to desirable future experiences. This creates an "experiential continuum" that improves the students'receptivity to further learning.

- **Involve students in planning at least some of their educational experiences.** This gives the students some sense of control in their education as well as a sense of ownership of what they learn.

- **Use consistent patterns for rewarding student achievement.** Relate the rewards to what your students find desirable. Some dropout prevention programs even offer students chances at winning stereo equipment, microcomputers, or cars for completing their education. But the day-to-day positive feedback of instructors for small, even routine achievement is every bit as important to students who so often view themselves as failures.

- **Provide preemployment and work maturity training** to students, but not until they are genuinely ready to conduct a job search. Remember, when teaching these skills, to focus on strengthening not only the specific skills of writing a resume, filling out a job application, dressing for success, and so forth, also encourage the development of underlying basic attitudes and skills: positive value systems, communication, decision making, conflict resolution, and interpersonal relations.

- **Watch for gaps in your students' study skills, career awareness, decision-making or problem-solving skills,** and other critical skill areas that may not relate directly to the course you are teaching. Such gaps may mean that you will need to meet with the student and fellow helping process team members to revise the student's IHP.

- **Use the services of other professionals,** such as psychologists, educational diagnosticians, occupational therapists, social workers, physicians, and so forth, to validate your observations about a student and to consult for optional ways of dealing with a student's problems. (For example, many students have undiagnosed learning disabilities; others, especially disadvantaged minority students, may be misdiagnosed as learning disabled and unfairly consider themselves academic misfits.) Even if such professionals are not part of your helping process team, their insights and suggestions can be invaluable.

- **Encourage a "family atmosphere"** in your classes and school. This means encouraging students to support each other and to work out problems together. At one dropout prevention program, the instructor waits until about the third week of school and then enlists students to look out for each other, take responsibility for each other, and so forth. This teacher also identifies the student leaders and enlists their help by telling them when they are leading in the wrong direction and encouraging them to "clean up their act" so that the others will follow. In a supportive peer culture where everyone has a voice, students soon realize that rules are in their own interests.

- **Take a "we won't allow you to fail" attitude with your at-risk students.** Make sure that they know that you will fit the materials and learning experiences to their needs, so they know that they can learn. If they don't, it can only be because they don't want to learn. Make it clear that they will have to work at it to fail! They are not dumb—only their decision to flunk is dumb.

- **Stay alert to the state of health of your students,** particularly for changes that may relate to nutrition, pregnancy, illness, drug or alcohol abuse, depression, chronic fatigue, or other physical or emotional problems that may require intervention. Be prepared

to discuss your observations with the student and, where necessary, to act as a broker for support services.

- **Support students who are pregnant** by making them feel welcome in class right up to delivery. Assist them in accessing clinics which provide quality care that is scaled to income. Support them after delivery by sending homework home for them. If possible, have them work ahead of the rest of their class group before delivery. If necessary, provide them with free tutoring in the home until they can find child care and return to school.

- **Respect the rights of parents** whenever issues of discipline become a problem by consulting with them—always—before you impose any punishment. This is important because it gives the parents a chance to bring up mitigating circumstances, allows the parents to participate in the choice of disciplinary action (if needed), and ensures that students perceive the school as delivering fair and equal justice.

- **Involve parents in their child's education** whenever possible. If the parent(s) are not members of the helping process team, you will need to find ways to involve them by encouraging them to help with the student's attendance, tutoring, homework, emotional support, transportation to outside support services, participation in family counseling, and other appropriate assistance.

- **Stay on top of what is going on in other components of the student's IHP.** This will help keep the student's experiences from becoming fragmented, compartmentalized, or delayed—situations that can undermine his or her sense of continuity and commitment to the program.

- **Request inservice or other training** for yourself and other team members if any part of your role(s) as a helping process team member requires you to perform tasks or assume responsibilities for which you are professionally unprepared. Ask your dropout prevention program coordinator or the administrator in charge of the overall program to arrange for such assistance.

- **Resist the notion that raising academic standards** (in response to the "call for excellence" in education) **is appropriate for at-risk students.** Studies show that overall, the increased learning time required by academically rigorous curricula will push many at-risk students into dropping out because of the conflict of extra tutoring or homework with family and work pressures. High standards in vocational courses should still deliver excellence in training without losing the students' interest or devouring too much of their time.

- **Talk to your at-risk students about their high school plans** and share your perceptions with them. Stress to them the necessity of regular school attendance and of passing courses.

- **Talk to your at-risk students about their plans or dreams for the future.** Look for ways to relate each student's personal plans and interests when individualizing classroom learning experiences.

- **Work closely with bilingual and/or ESL instructors,** a bilingual aide or tutor, or bilingual texts and materials if your at-risk student does not speak or read English well. Many bilingual materials already exist for basic skills, academic, and vocational education, and most will not require a great deal of effort on your part to use.

Bilingual/ESL Instructors

Obviously, many of the suggestions for vocational and academic teachers apply to those who teach ESL or teach courses bilingually. But here are some other ideas and reminders for bilingual/ESL teachers:

- **Avoid making fixed policies** about whether new students whose English is poor or nonexistent should receive bilingual education immediately or receive ESL training first. Focus instead on the best interests of the *individual student.* Be flexible whenever possible, because some students will do better with one approach over another.

- **Remember to emphasize not only language skills, but to relate learning to the broader range of skills** required as future citizens and workers in the United States.

- **Be prepared to act as interpreter** for your bilingual/ESL students with other members of the helping team. You may need to accompany the student and act in this capacity when the student goes for other support services in the school or community (particularly for health or legal services). Alternatively, you may need to help the student find a bilingual person the student will trust to act in this role. Remember: If you don't take responsibility to help in this area, the student may not receive the support he or she needs to stay in school.

- **Use bilingual aides and tutors** (including peer tutors)whenever possible to add to the number of bilingual persons providing support for your at-risk students. If you have no such aides or tutors on the regular staff, you may be able to train bilingual volunteers from the community to help at-risk students with class or homework. Bilingual college students who are majoring in the subject areas being taught could be brought in to work as tutors.

Tutors and Classroom Aides

Many of the instructional tips just given for teachers will be useful to you as a tutor or classroom aide. Since you most often work one-to-one with a student, you have opportunities to help the student with specific lessons that may be difficult. Try to keep in mind that dropout-prone students don't need your judgment, they need your help and encouragement to keep trying. This is even more true when a student feels frustrated or bored.

Keep in close communication with the teachers and other helping process team members to help work out problems and anticipate others so they can be worked on before they develop. If you need extra help or information for working with students who have disabilities or other unusual problems, don't hesitate to ask the other team members—especially if one is a counselor or rehabilitation specialist—for help or advice.

As a tutor or classroom aide, you may be in a better position than any other adult in the school to become friends with an at-risk student. This role may be even more important in some ways than your educational one. As a friend, you can help students to understand their problems, to realize that the helping team is on their side, to stay in school, and to build their hope for a positive future.

Support Service Persons

Guidance Counselors

You will probably be a helping process team member for a number of at-risk students. Some of your most demanding responsibilities will be to stay current with the changes in each student's school and life circumstances, to provide the emotional and guidance support that each student needs at varying times, to keep up with record keeping and other paperwork responsibilities, and to serve as a resource for the other team members.

Here are some suggestions to help you do a good job as a helping process team member:

- **Keep up to date and in close contact with external support service providers** that are part of or act as resources for your dropout prevention program. Chances are good that other helping team members will look to you as a resource to broker for outside services for the students, and you will need to know which group offers what service for which populations, who to contact, costs of service, and so forth.

- **Provide or encourage others in the school to provide career exploration opportunities** for at-risk students. Such experiences help dropout-prone students define more explicitly their personal, school-related, and occupational goals. Such experiences should be offered as an early alternative, though, or the students may feel overwhelmed by too many options. Also, such experiences should ideally be integrated with the rest of the curriculum.

- **Work with the student to assess his or her aptitudes, attitudes, desires, and needs.** You will need this information to work with the student and other members of the helping process team when developing or updating the student's Individualized Helping Plan.

- **Encourage students you suspect may be dropout-prone to begin taking vocational training** as early as possible—in the ninth grade, if possible. Early vocational training experiences are correlated with higher retention rates among at-risk students.

- **Avoid the use of unidimensional decision rules** to identify or classify your dropout-prone students and discourage other school personnel from applying such stereotypes as well. These rules use such a single, stereotypical factor (e.g., low SES, academic achievement, or attendance levels) rather than individual student characteristics. Studies have shown that a multidimensional approach is more reliable. For example, a classification rule employing five variables (graduation plans, age over 16 or under 16, times moved since fifth grade, introversion versus extroversion, and plans regarding college) is usually reliable for predicting dropout proneness for individual students.

- **Use a variety of counseling** approaches, including individual, small group, and large group sessions.

- **Schedule small and large group counseling sessions on a regular basis** to give students an opportunity to discuss their concerns with a minimum of negative risk. Teachers or other helping process team members can be included in these meetings—if the students agree. Alternatively, you can provide appropriate feedback to the faculty and staff following the meetings.

- **Provide information, advice, and/or inservice training to helping team members** who need assistance when working with at-risk students who have disabilities or special behavioral difficulties.

- **Make yourself available to helping process teams to observe particular at-risk students, test them, or talk to them** if team members sense a problem and ask you to validate its existence.

- **Work with students to build their self-confidence** and their willingness to become engaged in their education and to behave in socially acceptable ways. At the same time, make clear to them behavior or performance that is not acceptable and suggest alternative ways for them to act under difficult circumstances.

- **Conduct periodic assessments of at-risk students' medical, social, psychological, and educational strengths and weaknesses through comprehensive testing.** You may need to coordinate with outside service providers for health-related or psychiatric assessments. Comprehensive assessment is often infrequent for at-risk students, even though the reasons they drop out often extend beyond academic issues.

- **Make sure that your at-risk students are aware of their right to stay in school until they are 21.** Some dropout-prone students may elect to stay in school or perhaps attend on a part-time basis if they know they have this option and are encouraged to use it without stigma.

- **Be sensitive to issues of learning disability (LD).** Some at-risk students may be learning disabled but have never been diagnosed as such. Other students (particularly disadvantaged minorities and those with limited English proficiency) may have been "dumped" into LD classes earlier in their school careers for the convenience of teachers who did not want to deal with them. When in doubt, refer a student to an educational diagnostician to settle the issue.

- **Refer at-risk students with serious emotional problems—especially those related to family problems—to a family counseling specialist.** Recovery from childhood trauma or ongoing abuse or neglect may require psychological and other services over an extended period of time. If you are qualified to provide such services and have a good relationship with the student, however, do try to provide these services yourself, as the greater the continuity and confidentiality of psychological support services, the better the probable outcome for the student.

- **Offer social and vocational counseling to at-risk students while they are on the job in co-op or other work/study situations.** Dropout-prone students need support and encouragement to succeed in the work environment and to make appropriate career-related decisions. Guidance and career counseling should not stop at the school door, if at all possible.

Truant Officer/Attendance Aides

Poor attendance is a serious problem for many dropout-prone students. Some simply get out of the habit of getting up for school; others have family obligations, work schedules, or other obstacles that keep them from going to school on time or at all.

A report from the Institute for Educational Leadership, *Dropouts in America* (Hahn, Dansberger, and Lefkowitz 1987), suggests that school districts restructure their truancy offices to stimulate greater linkage between schools, students' homes, and the community. Under such a restructuring, truant officers serve as "case managers" for at-risk students and not only enforce the law but also make referrals to help the students and their families deal with problems outside the educational system that contribute to the students' absenteeism.

Regardless of how a dropout prevention program chooses to handle its students' truancy problems, the most important thing that helping team members need to remember is to avoid blaming. Instead, whoever acts as the attendance aide (whether a truant officer or another team member) should find out what is causing the absenteeism and then see to it that the student and/or family get whatever support, assistance, or service referrals are needed to help the student get to school.

Here are some suggestions for working with attendance problems:

- **Be prepared to deal with truancy problems and deliver attendance assistance in a positive, consistent, and patient manner** for as long as necessary (although most students seem to get back into the habit of getting up for school again after about 3-6 weeks of assistance). Sometimes the "broken record" approach is all that works.

- **Work with the student and other team members to set specific truancy cut-off points** (e.g., if the student misses more than 1 day a week, or perhaps more than 10 days in a quarter or semester for reasons other than illness verified by a doctor's note, the student will fail). Students needs to know these limits and the reasons for them.

- **Work with other team members, especially teachers, to stress to students the importance of regular school attendance.**

- **Use computers to track your at-risk students'attendance patterns.** When a certain pattern or accumulation of absent days occurs for a student, you will be aware of the problem.

- **Respond to critical absence patterns as soon as they begin to develop;** don't wait until absenteeism becomes an ingrained habit or the student has already fallen substantially behind in classwork. Early warning combined with early action is the effective response.

- **Try to work directly with the student first when responding to absenteeism.** Only if attendance does not improve should you then contact the parent(s) to discuss the problem.

- **Develop ways to reinforce and reward good attendance** and gain the cooperation of other school faculty and staff in reinforcing and rewarding the attendance.

- **Develop a positive attitude toward** attendance among students who are habitually absent by assuring them that, as of today, they have a fresh start and their past record will not be held against them. This turns some students'attendance patterns around right away.

- **Arrange for or make wake-up phone calls** to students who have truancy problems. You may be able to find community volunteers to handle this for you on a daily basis. Volunteers may provide students with needed transportation, too.

- **Have ready a variety of possible strategies** that you and parents can use to encourage and support a student's regular attendance when working with the parent(s) on a student's absenteeism. Make clear to the parents that you are willing to try every reasonable approach, but that their cooperation and assistance are vital.

- **Act as a broker for students and their families** if the absenteeism relates to a need for additional services (e.g., day care, transportation, embarrassment about poor clothing, or other problems keeping students from attending school regularly).

- **Be willing to act as a mediator or advocate for students** in situations where it may be necessary to negotiate with an employer to revise the student's work schedule to permit school attendance.

- **Act as an advocate for flexible school program hours** for your at-risk students if you detect a pattern of employment or other obligations that keeps a significant number of the students from attending school during regular hours.

Social Workers, Health Care Workers, and Other Noneducation Professionals

Increasingly, dropout prevention programs bring agency workers into the schools to provide their services right where the students spend most of their day. In almost all cases, these professionals—social workers, health care workers, public assistance workers, parole supervisors, family counselors, substance abuse treatment specialists, and so forth—remain primarily responsible to their agencies and are paid by them. But while in the school, they work hand-in-glove with school faculty and staff and whenever possible should be included on helping process teams for at-risk students who need their services.

Regardless of whether you work in a school or at your agency office, as a member of a helping process team you will need to meet with other team members on a regular basis. You will also need to keep the team up to date (within the bounds of necessary confidentiality) on your progress with the student. If something develops that the team needs to know but a meeting is not possible, communicate with the team leader or the program coordinator about the new situation.

Above all, try to think of yourself and your service as part of a **team effort,** regardless of the kind of support you provide the student. Remember that the team is trying to treat the whole child. Avoid the temptation to compartmentalize the student's life for your own or the team's convenience. In addition, resist falling into turf battles over who should have jurisdiction over which of the student's problems; in such battles, everyone loses—especially the student. *The Helping Process Overview Guidebook* offers some important information and suggestions for working smoothly as a team for everyone's benefit.

Community Volunteers

Community volunteers can do much to help young people stay in school. For example, the entertainer Lionel Richie recently volunteered his support to the Cities in Schools dropout prevention program's "superstudent" contest, which awarded tickets to Lionel's concert tour, tour jackets, and backstage passes to students whose eligibility depended on perfect school attendance, improvement in their grades, and avoidance of behavior problems.

Most volunteers fill many crucial roles that help and encourage potential dropouts to go to school, work hard to learn, and persevere. As a volunteer, you may act as a teacher, a speaker, a tutor, a bilingual interpretor or instructor, a classroom aide, a driver, an on-the-job trainer, an attendance aide, an infant care worker for teenage mothers, a placement worker, or any number of other much-needed roles. Schools and agencies can't do it all; there are too many students who need help and too few hours in a day.

As a volunteer on a student's helping process team, you will probably find yourself working closely with teachers and other professionals. Even though they may know more than you do about the student's academic problems, your ideas and opinions are just as important as anyone else's. In fact, if you are not a professional, you may have an advantage over other team members. You may find it easier to become friends with the student, because he or she won't think of you as an authority figure.

Few things are as important for dropout-prone students as making friends with a caring adult. Many of these students don't receive much

caring at home. Sometimes they don't act very grown up because their own parents don't act grown up either. Or they act "tough" because they're afraid to show their natural feelings of insecurity, confusion, or emotional pain. With your patience and caring, the student may eventually be able to relax around you and share his or her true feelings. As a friend, you can act as a role model, showing the student how to act as a mature, productive person. You may even go beyond that to become what is called a **mentor,** a person who becomes a student's surrogate parent. (If the idea appeals to you, there is an entire helping process booklet devoted to mentoring. You may want to read it.)

Here are some specific suggestions for you to help you be an effective community volunteer in a dropout prevention program:

- **Remember to treat the students with whom you work with respect,** even if they are difficult persons. Most hostile people are actually afraid of something, and many of them have very poor self-esteem. If you don't know how to deal positively with a student who is hostile or has other behavior problems, turn to your fellow helping process team members for advice and assistance.

- **Work patiently to convince dropout-prone students that they can have a good future** if they stay in school and learn. You will need to be persistent about this, because many students' families, peers (such as fellow gang members), and even some of their earlier teachers may have convinced them that they are good for nothing and will never achieve anything.

- **Lend your name and time to publicity or other projects** of a dropout prevention program if your name and/or efforts will help.

- **Encourage other people like yourself to volunteer their time** to the dropout prevention program. People who have special skills—nurses, skilled workers, ex-teachers, and other professionals—can add a lot to a program. But other people who don't have professional skills also make very valuable contributions, perhaps as bilingual tutors or day care volunteers that makes good use of people's willingness to give time and caring to young people who need their help.

- **Encourage community organizations to which you belong** (such as church groups, the Elks, Shriners, Girl Scouts of America, Boys Clubs, and so forth) **to support the dropout prevention program** by donating time, money, or other resources. For example, your organization might set up a college scholarship fund for students of the program, offer recreational programming, host field trips or camps, provide leadership training, offer prizes to high-achieving students, organize a team of volunteer tutors, and so forth.

- **Speak to students about your own experiences,** especially if you were a dropout (or almost a dropout), a very young parent, a substance abuser or abuse victim, or had other experiences that are like those the students are facing. By sharing your feelings and insights, you can help these young people get a more realistic idea of what they want for themselves and their futures.

- **Be sensitive to students' feelings and their right to confidentiality** when deciding what to share with other helping process team members. Naturally, there may be some things that you probably should not tell the other adults, but there may be other things (such as pregnancy, drug or alcohol abuse, divorce, sexual or physical abuse in the home, and so forth) that you may learn from a student that other team members really do need to know. Use your own judgment about these things, but if you do decide to share confidential information, be careful to do so in a way that will not embarrass the student. Do not betray the confidence to people who do not really need to know.

- **Invite students to participate in community events** in which you are involved, whether they are events intended for entertainment or for community service. For example, you may invite students to adopt a poor family for Thanksgiving or Christmas and raise money or collect donations to provide for some of that family's needs. Or you may invite students to help you paint and fix up the home of an invalid or elderly person who cannot afford to buy such services. These kinds of activities give students an experience of belonging, cooperation, and achievement that they may not otherwise get.

- **Be careful not to impose your personal ideas** about religion, politics, or other matters of personal choice on the students with whom you work. Even though they are young, the students have a right to make their own discoveries and form their own ideas and personalities. They will sense immediately if you do not respect their rights to these things, and you will lose their trust and cooperation.

Parents and Other Family Members

If your son or daughter is in a dropout prevention program at their school, you should be invited to become a member of your child's helping process team. Even though it may not always seem to be true, parents have more influence on their children's attitudes about school and work than just about anyone else. That influence, though, can be either positive or negative, depending on the quality of your relationship with your child. By working on your child's helping process team, you are showing your child that you are committed to his or her success in life.

Of course, many parents will not have the time to be regular members of a helping process team, and you may be one of them. In that case, you may still want to keep in touch with the helping process team (maybe through the program coordinator or team leader). You may want to attend a team meeting occasionally just to keep up with what is being done to help your son or daughter get through school. And there may be times when a problem comes up that needs your direct attention and cooperation.

If you do become a team member, you will have a full voice in developing your child's Individualized Helping Plan to help keep him or her in school and learning well. You will be asked to be patient with your child, to be encouraging instead of discouraging, to help your child by making sure that homework is done and your child goes to school, and so forth. If there are problems in your family that are affecting your child's will or ability to stay in school, you, as well as your child and the rest of the family, may be asked to work on those problems, perhaps with the help of a family counselor or other professional.

Here are some specific things you can do to help your son or daughter make the most of the helping process.

- **Encourage your child to finish school and get a diploma.** Your child may not really understand the connection between education and getting into an occupation that will earn him or her a good life. Sometimes it seems that "good grades don't put groceries on the table," but in the long run, getting a good education will help your child do a lot better than that.

- **Try to learn more about the education programs** available to your child through the school, especially vocational programs and basic academic skills courses (reading, math, and language skills). Ask teachers about the programs and why they are important. Ask the about placements—how many students who graduate from certain programs get jobs; find out what kinds of jobs they get and who hires them in your community. When you have this kind of information, you'll be able to give better advice to your child about what courses to take in school and what kind of jobs to think about getting after he or she graduates.

- **Give your child extra support,** especially if you are going through a divorce or separation, if a family member has recently died, if you have a serious financial crisis, if there are drug or alcohol abuse problems in the family, or if other kinds of problems in the home are getting out of hand. **Family problems are a major reason that many young people drop out of school.** Try to help your child understand that these problems are not his or her fault. Communicate with the team coordinator when there are home-circumstances that might affect your child's well-being in school. If you feel you cannot help your child, or if you are having problems coping, yourself, please don't hesitate to get help from your minister or rabbi or from a professional counselor. If you don't know where to go for help, you can privately ask your child's school counselor or a trusted member of the helping process team to get the information for you.

- **Cooperate to the best of your ability with your child's mentor.** Many helping process teams try to find an adult in the school or community (often a teacher, tutor, or employer) who can become a close friend with your child and act as a surrogate parent. Don't

worry—mentors don't try to replace parents! They only want the same thing you do—what is best for your child. But you need to realize that many dropout-prone students need an adult friend to talk to who isn't part of their family and who can give them a fresh perspective on their problems. If you feel that your child's mentor is undermining your authority or in some way interfering with your child's progress, you need to talk to the mentor and come to some reasonable agreement about how to deal with your child's problems. If you feel that you need other adults' opinions about the mentor, you should discuss the matter with the entire helping process team.

- **Act as a role model for your child—no one can do it better!** Consciously or unconsciously, your son or daughter imitates the ways you deal with the world. Try to develop positive attitudes and actions in yourself. If you cope fairly well with problems as they arise, you child will learn those ways of coping (even though it may not always look that way). If you work hard to get along well with other people, your children will value good relationships, too. The same goes for education, for work, and for life.

Employers

Some students drop out of school because family responsibilities or other pressures require that they get a job and start earning money. Others leave school and go to work because school means nothing but failure to them and they think—often mistakenly—that they'll be finally able to make something of themselves in the work world.

Studies of dropouts suggest that what may motivate these students to drop out is something even stronger than the lure or need for money—they hunger for a chance to show that they can succeed at something. And employment is where they go to satisfy that hunger.

The problem, of course, is that few employed dropouts ever do make much of themselves. Most of them end up in low-skilled, dead-end jobs, and their rates of absenteeism and turnover in jobs are appalling. These young people need to stay in school (or go back to it) long enough to develop functional literacy—basic reading, writing,

math, and language skills—and to learn vocational skills that, with a high school diploma or G.E.D., will qualify them for employment with a future. Making this happen is not only the responsibility of the schools; it is the responsibility of the community as a whole.

The need or desire among young people to work can't be ignored. Successful dropout prevention programs all over the country show that the best way for most at-risk students to learn is to **combine learning with working.** You, as an employer or worker in a company, have a great deal to offer to help young people succeed in school. The payoff to you will be a better educated work force, a safer and healthier community, and the satisfaction of helping young people become successful, productive human beings.

Here are some of the specific things you can do as a volunteer member of a student's helping process team:

- **Provide part-time, paid employment for at-risk students** at your company through cooperative education agreements, internships, or other arrangements with the school. In such arrangements, make sure that teachers know exactly what kinds of job tasks the students perform so that classroom learning can build on work experiences. It isn't the employment or the classroom learning that makes the difference—it's a strong connection between the two activities that seems to have the best effect on potential dropouts.

- **Provide on-the-job training, close supervision, peer support, and gradual increases in job responsibilities** to at-risk students you hire.

- **Emphasize the importance of good basic academic skills and positive work attitudes** and habits to all of your young workers, whether they are at-risk students or not.

- **Offer above-minimum starting wages** to your at-risk student workers as an incentive to work for you, and provide small, incremental, but regular, increases in wages to reinforce good work performance and discourage them from seeking better paying work elsewhere.

- **Be as flexible as possible in your support of your student workers.** School schedules, homework demands, transportation problems, or home responsibilities—particularly for single parents—may require that you rearrange work schedules for them and make some other concessions. It is important to strike a balance, however, because student workers must learn to deal with the realities of the work world. If a problem arises that you cannot readily resolve, you may need to work it out with the student and the entire helping process team at a meeting.

- **Open your place of business to site visits** by at-risk students to give them an opportunity to shadow some of your employees, gain an understanding of employer expectations, and see what occupations in your business or industry are like.

- **Volunteer to become a mentor** for a student. Mentors are more than friends and helpers—they act as surrogate parents for a student, providing caring, counsel, and adult insights for dropout-prone students. Another helping process booklet devoted to mentoring will give you detailed information, if you're interested.

- **Teach a class or be a speaker** to students in the dropout prevention program. If you have particular vocational skills, you might team-teach a vocational class or two with the school instructor. That will give you an opportunity to share your insights and experiences with the students about your occupation and the work world. You could also teach students some basic skills by showing them how to perform important functional skills, such as balancing a checkbook, reading want ads, filling out job applications, preparing a simple tax return, and so forth.

- **Help at-risks students find jobs in your community,** even if you can't offer them a job yourself. Lend your influence to get other companies to provide part-time jobs for the students.

- **Volunteer your time or loan some of your workers' paid time to tutor students in the program.**

- **Contribute the use of your company services or facilities** (e.g., training center, off-line equipment, meeting space, recreational facilities, health office) to serve some of the at-risk students'

needs. For example, you could allow a relevant vocational class to gain practical experience on company equipment when your own workers aren't using it. If your company offers day care services to your employees, you might extend those services to some young mothers in the dropout program. You may even consider inviting students to participate in team sports at your company gym or on company teams.

- **Establish a fund (perhaps with other corporations) to provide college scholarships** for students who graduate from high school. The first of these initiatives was New York philanthropist Eugene Lang's "I've Got a Dream Foundation," which set aside $2,000 each for an entire class of sixth graders who successfully completed high school. Fifty of Lang's original 61 students are still in school and expect to graduate.

- **Set up an "adopt-a-kid" fund.** Business leaders in Chicago invested $10 a week for their "adopted" student as long as the student maintains good attendance and grades. In Des Moines, Iowa, this kind of program started with some students in fifth grade and will deliver up to $1,200 toward college tuition if they finish high school.

- **Consider forming a consortium with other area companies and organizations to develop your own form of the "Boston Compact."** Under this innovative arrangement—a high-level agreement among leading Boston employers, colleges, social service agencies, and the public schools—students who successfully complete high school are guaranteed placement in a job, training program, or postsecondary education. Since the Compact was put in place, student attendance in Boston has increased by 10 percent and reading and math scores have gone up.

- **Donate material incentives**—a car, designer watches, radios, cameras, and so forth—for the dropout prevention program to use to help keep students in schools. Only program completers have chances to win these prizes. Alternatively, contribute supplies, tickets, equipment, or any other items your business may have to offer to help raise funds for the dropout prevention program or to aid in its operation.

DROPOUT PREVENTION SERIES

THE HELPING PROCESS

Targeted at the various individuals who have roles to play in a successful student retention effort, this series of six booklets and videocassette delineates the activities necessary to create a supportive team of adults to help students gain a diploma, job-entry skills, and options for further education. The Professional Set includes a single copy of each of the booklets and the videocassette.

SP700HP	Professional Set	$39.50
SP700HP01	Helping Process Overview Guidebook	$ 6.50
SP700HP02	Helping Process Booklet Administrators/Planners	$ 3.50
SP700HP03	Helping Process Booklet Program Coordinators	$ 3.50
SP700HP04	Helping Process Booklet Team Members	$ 3.50
SP700HP05	Helping Process Booklet Mentors (package of 5 copies)	$ 5.50
SP700HP06	Helping Process Booklet Students (package of 5 copies)	$ 5.50
SP700HP07	Helping Process Introductory Videocassette	$25.00

THE STUDENT'S CHOICE

Designed to introduce decision-making and problem-solving techniques and to offer instruction in interpersonal life-management skills. The Professional Set includes the ***Instructor Guide*** and ***The Time of Choices*** videocassette as well as a complimentary copy of the consumable student workbook ***The Student's Choice***.

SP700SC	Professional Set	$49.50
SP700SC01	The Student's Choice (package of 10 copies) (Student Workbook)	$49.50

IT'S YOUR LIFE . . . TAKE CHARGE

Designed to heighten student's awareness of factors leading to dropping out and to help students consider their choices. The Professional Set includes ***It's Your Life . . . Take Charge*** videocassette with user's guide and a complimentary copy of ***It's Your Life . . . Take Charge*** student workbook.

SP700TC	Professional Set	$49.50
SP700TC01	It's Your Life Take Charge (package of 10 copies) (Student Workbook in English)	$19.50
SP700TC02	Es Tu Vida toma control (package of 10 copies) (Student Workbook in Spanish)	$19.50

ADMINISTRATOR MATERIALS

SP700DP01	A Guide for Dropout Prevention: Creating an Integrated Learning Environment in Secondary Schools	$13.25
SP700DP02	The School's Choice: Guidelines for Dropout Prevention at the Middle and Junior High School	$13.25